

Message Text

CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 01 SANA 01170 121626Z

43/20

ACTION AF-06

INFO OCT-01 EUR-12 NEA-10 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-04

H-02 INR-07 L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 PRS-01 SP-02

SS-15 USIA-06 ACDA-07 MC-02 AID-05 IO-13 /102 W

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R 071355Z APR 76

FM AMEMBASSY SANA

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 7765

INFO AMEMBASSY CAIRO

AMEMBASSY ADDIS ABABA

AMEMBASSY JIDDA

JQUMZV/AMEMBASSY KHARTOUM 696

AMEMBASSY MOSCOW

AMEMBASSY MOGADISCIO

C O N F I D E N T I A L SANA 1170

C O R R E C T E D C O P Y (F O R E . O . , T A G S , A N D S U B J L I N E S)

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: MASS

SUBJ: SOVIET MILITARY ASSISTANCE TO ETHIOPIA

1. ON APRIL 5 ETHIOPIAN AMBASSADOR TASSEW DESTA TOLD ME IN CONFIDENCE THAT THE SOVIET UNION LAST SUMMER TURNED DOWN A LARGE ETHIOPIAN REQUEST FOR MILITARY ASSISTANCE, WHILE RECOMMENDING THAT ETHIOPIA FOR TIME BEING CONTINUE TO RELY ON US. AMBASSADOR DESTA, WHO WAS FORMERLY COMMANDER OF THE ETHIOPIAN NAVY, ADDED THAT THE REQUEST OF THE SOVIETS WAS MADE BY THE PRESENT LEFTIST LEADERSHIP OF THE DIRG, WHICH WISHES FOR IDEOLOGICAL REASONS TO MOVE CLOSER TO THE SOVIETS. THE MORE SENIOR MILITARY COMMANDERS, HOWEVER, ADVISED THEIR YOUNGER AND MORE LEFTIST COLLEAGUES THAT ETHIOPIAN MILITARY FORCES ARE TOO DEPENDENT ON U.S. ARMS TO EFFECT SUCH A BASIC CHANGE PARTICULARLY AT A TIME WHEN SOMALIA IS THREATENING DJIBOUTI.

CONFIDENTIAL

CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 02 SANA 01170 121626Z

2. DESTA OBSERVED THAT THE LEFTIST OFFICERS WERE QUITE SHAKEN WHEN THE SOVIET UNION TURNED THEM DOWN. HE CONTINUED THAT THIS WOULD HAVE BEEN A GOOD TIME FOR THE U.S. TO HAVE MOVED AGAINST THE DIRG ALTHOUGH HE ADMITTED THAT HE WASN'T SURE JUST WHAT THE U.S. COULD HAVE DONE. HE ADDED THAT THERE IS STILL TIME FOR THE U.S. TO TAKE ADVANTAGE OF A DETERIORATING ECONOMIC AND POLITICAL SITUATION BUT WAS GENERALLY PESSIMISTIC ABOUT THE NEXT FEW YEARS IN VIEW OF THE SERIOUS LACK OF LEADERSHIP AROUND WHICH MODERATE FORCES MIGHT RALLY. HE CONCLUDED THAT IT WAS TRULY A SAD TIME IN THE HISTORY OF ETHIOPIA WHEN MANY ETHIOPIANS USUALLY INTENSELY PATRIOTIC ARE HOPING THAT SOMALIA WILL ATTACK DJIBOUTI AND THEREBY BRING ABOUT A WAR WITH ETHIOPIA WHICH SOMALIA WOULD WIN BUT WHICH WOULD THEN GIVE THE MODERATES A CHANCE TO OUST THE LEFT.

3. COMMENT: I HAVE NO WAY OF JUDGING USEFULNESS OF ABOVE INFORMATION BUT HAVE BEEN IMPRESSED WITH THE INTELLIGENCE AND OPENNESS OF DESTA WHO APPEKKS DEEPLY APPREHENSIVE ABOUT THE CURRENT DRIFT TO THE LEFT IN ETHIOPIA AND WHO ALSO SEEMS TO BE A FRIEND OF U.S. AMBASSADOR DESTA IS A GALLA CHRISTIAN WHO HAS PRESUMABLY BEEN EXILED TO SANA AS AMBASSADOR BECAUSE OF HIS OPPOSITION TO THE PRESENT REGIME.
SCOTES

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NNN

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Margaret P. Grafeld
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